



LOGGERS' LINGO





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## LOGGERS' LINGO

(A Glossary Of Logging Terms)

The men who harvest the big timber in the Pacific Northwest have, through the years, developed a language all their own. Some of these terms stem from the Maine logging of 150-200 years ago. Others date back to the Lake States and a few from the South, but most were born in the woods of Washington, Oregon, California and Idaho. Harold Olson, well known Western Pine Association forestry writer, compiled this listing after broad experience in the Douglas fir and Western pine regions as a logger, a newspaperman and later as western manager for American Forest Products Industries, Inc., national sponsor of the tree farm program.

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\* Loggers' Lingo



## LOGGERS' LINGO

(A glossary of logging terms)

- ADVERSE -- Uphill road grade for loaded log trucks or trains.
- ALIBI DAY -- Pay day in the camps, when many loggers develop toothaches, requiring trips to town.
- BACKFIRE -- Controlled fire set ahead of wild fire to reduce fuel materials.
- BAKEHEAD -- Railroad fireman. Also called the "tallowpot."
- BARBER CHAIR -- On stump, slivered wood between undercut and back cut, sometimes sticking up a foot or more, resembling back of a chair.
- BELLY ACHE -- Transmission trouble in logging tractor.
- BILTMORE STICK -- A specialized ruler for measuring height, diameter and volume of trees.
- BIG BLUE BUTT -- A large butt log, sometimes heavy enough at one end to sink. Railroad ties from such logs are called sinkers.
- BIRLING -- Log rolling. (In water.)
- BIRDSEYE TENDERLOIN -- Ox meat showing marks of bullwhacker's goad. (Early West.)
- BLOWUP -- Explosive-like spread of a forest fire due to weather conditions.
- BOILING UP -- Washing clothes in camp.
- BOOMER -- Migratory logger.
- BOOTJACK -- Handy device in roughhouse melees, designed to help loggers get caulked boots off.
- BRAINS -- Company president or other high official.
- BOOM -- Log storage in water.
- BUCKSKIN -- Weathered snag, bark off.
- BUCKER -- Man who saws felled trees into log lengths. According to fallers, a buckler is made-over faller, on who has been hit on the head by falling branches.
- BULLCOOK -- Camp chore-boy or handyman.
- BULLBUCK -- Cutting crew boss. He's a key man, and many technically trained foresters are to be found on this job.
- BULL CHOKER -- Heavy choker used when extra strength is needed to move big log or overcome bad hangup.
- BULL OF THE WOODS -- Logging superintendent.

2.

BULLWHACKER -- Ox teamster of early western logging.

BUG KILL -- Trees or timber stands killed by insects.

BUNK -- Log rest on railroad car or truck. Also logger's bed.

BUNKHOUSE FABLES -- Colorful narratives of adventures on the last trip to town.

BUMPER -- Full name, knot bumper. He trims limbs still left on logs at landing. Also unhooks chokers. Term applies mostly to Western Pine region. Counterpart in Douglas fir logging is landing chaser.

BUSHELING -- Contract work at so much per thousand board feet.

BUNKHOUSE -- Camp logger's home, where new logging records are made nightly, starting right after supper.

CAULKS -- (Pronounced "Corks") Steel pegs in soles of heavy boots, giving loggers secure footing in woods.

CAMP ROBBER -- Canada jay or whiskey jack, bird about size of robin that hangs out among loggers, especially when fed.

CANDY SIDE -- Fast, highball, well-equipped operation.

CAMP INSPECTOR -- Short-stake logger.

CAT DOCTOR -- Tractor mechanic.

CAT -- Tractor.

CATFACE -- Partly healed fire scar on tree, usually at base.

CAT SKINNER -- Tractor driver.

CHANCE -- A "show", or an operation. Example: "Truck chance" means transport by truck best; "winter chance" means loggable in winter.

CHASER -- Man who unhooks chokers at spar tree.

CHEAT STICK -- Log scaler's measuring rule.

CHERRY PICKER -- Crane or other power rig for picking up logs along railroad or truck road. Sometimes used for short skidding jobs.

CHOKER -- Steel necktie, wire rope loop to grip logs for the pull to landing. Usually 3/4 to 1-1/2 inch diameter, 15 to 35 feet long, knob at both ends and sliding hook for either knob.

CHOKERMAN -- Also known as choker setter. He fixes the chokers around logs.

CHUNK -- Broken log.

3.

CONK -- Tree disease, usually detectable from fruiting body growth.

COSMOPOLIS FLUSH -- Four-card flush in poker game. A busted flush.

COLD DECK -- A pile of logs yarded in to a tree.

COUGAR MILK -- Prohibition-era woods liquor.

CRUMMY -- Caboose of log train. Crew car of truck logging outfits.

COLD TRAILING -- Digging fire line along edge of forest fire that appears to be dead, as a safety measure in case it should revive.

CROWN FIRE -- Fire traveling through foliage of trees.

DENDROCTONUS -- A destructive bark beetle which annually kills millions of feet of timber. In the Western Pine country they have a ditty:

"Oh see the dendroctonus beetle;  
He lives in the bark of the pine.  
He lives on the pitch  
The son of a ----,  
And he's harder to kill than a lion."

DINGING -- Loaders riding hook or tongs. (Prohibited by safety codes.)

DONKEY -- Steam engine, upright boiler, several drums, mounted on heavy log sled, used as logging power plant. Now largely supplanted by gasoline and diesel units.

DONKEY PUNCHER -- Engineer.

DRAG 'ER -- To quit.

DUTCH COUPLING -- Unfinished log cut left by buckers. Very dangerous to rigging crew.

DUFF -- Humus and partly decayed organic matter of forest floor.

DYNAMITE -- Snuff.

EAGLE EYE -- Section boss. Also called "king snipe."

FALLER -- One who cuts down trees. Called sawyer in pine region. Fir region buckers say fallers are buckers who were hit hard in head.

FLY CAMP -- Stub, or temporary camp.

FISH EGGS -- Tapioca pudding.

FLYING DUTCHMAN -- A rigging hookup for high-leading parallel to railroad.

FERNHOPPER -- West coast forester.



4.

FIRE LINE -- A strip dug to mineral earth around a forest fire. Usually built now with bulldozers, its purpose is two-fold; To try to stop the fire; to be starting line for backfires.

FLYER -- Type of skyline donkey used in the '20's.

FORE AND AFT -- A skidroad built in steep country for sliding logs into water.

GANDY DANCER -- Section worker on railroad. Track gang member.

GANDY DANCING -- Hiding gravel. Raising rail track after new ballast has been dumped.

GYPPO -- Contract logger or small operator. Many versions are heard as to origin of word. One is that during World War I, when log skidding was frequently contracted out to small operators who had a team of horses, such operators moved about a lot and got to be known as "gypsies." In pine country they were also known as packsackers. With the years, "Gypsy" developed into the euphemous "gyppo". The term may have had a certain tang of "Haywiring" in its earlier days, but not now. "Gyppo" is widely used and universally accredited, and it does not denote "gypping".

GROUSE LADDERS -- Limby trees, wolf trees.

GUT ROBBER -- Cook.

GOAT -- Switching engine in woods. Also applied to small, pressure-tank burner used for starting fires in oil-burning donkey engines.

GIVE 'ER SNOOSE -- To increase power, to hurry up, to get the babbitt out of the well-known shoes.

GOPHER -- Powderman. He shoots small holes under logs so rigging men can get choker around log.

GOT 'ER MADE -- Quitting.

GROAN BOX -- Radio.

GIN POLE -- Short spar tree for loading.

GUESSING STICK -- Graduated stick used in estimating tree heights and volumes.

GILFLIRT (verb) -- All fouled up. (From horse logging days.)

HOOKEER -- Common in pine country, pairs of men at landing, handling the loading hooks. Also applied sometimes to the following:

HOOKTENDER -- The boss of the rigging, or yarding, crew in high lead logging.

HOISTER -- Jammer operator in pine country. Also known as puncher.

HITLER -- In one area of the Western Pine region the first gas-powered chain saw came from Germany in 1936 or 1937. It was manufactured at Kiel, parts assembled at Vancouver, B.C. Loggers got to calling all gas chain saws "Hitlers". Term did not become general and did not stick.



5.

HINDU -- Loop at end of straw line, carrying hook.

HIGHBALL SIDE -- The fast, regular logging side of any operation.

HOOSIER -- Green man in woods.

HOOSIER UP (verb) -- To play practical jokes on embryo loggers.

HEN SKINS -- Light summer underwear.

HAYBURNER -- Horse.

HAIR POUNDER -- Teamster.

HYPSONETER -- An instrument for measuring height of trees.

HIGH WHEELS -- Gigantic wheels once used for skidding.

HAYWIRE -- Out of order, second rate.

HAYWIRE SHOW -- Poorly equipped logging operation.

HIGHBALL -- Hurry up.

HAULBACK -- Steel cable that pulls main line and chokers back to the woods from yarding tree.

HIGH LEAD BLOCK -- Gigantic steel pulley, weighing up to 3,600 pounds, strapped to top of spar tree for carrying main line.

HIGH LEAD -- Logging system using lifting power of high rigging to get logs up and over obstructions on way in from woods to landing.

HIGHCLIMBER -- Man who cuts off tops of chosen spar trees and hangs rigging in them for the setting.

HOME GUARD -- Steady employe, opposite of camp inspector.

HIT THE BALL -- Get going. Speed up operations.

HIT THE PIKE -- Head for town.

HOGHEAD -- Locomotive engineer.

HARDTACK OUTFIT -- Poorly feeding outfit.

HOOT-NANNY -- Undercutter. A device to hold crosscut saw while sawing from underneath.

HANGUP -- A turn of logs fouled up in a root, snag or stump.

HOOKTENDER'S SPECIAL -- A four-fingered helping of snooze, mixed with a wad of chewing tobacco, recommended by foremen for keeping loggers "on the ball."

6.

IN THE BIGHT -- A married logger. Also denotes dangerous area in rigging, where line under stress may strike a workman.

INKSLINGER -- Timekeeper.

IRON BURNER -- Blacksmith.

INCREMENT -- Increase in wood growth.

INCREMENT BORER -- Instrument for core-drilling tree trunks. Foresters read history of tree in core, which records annual growth.

JILLPOKE -- A prop, a pole to pry; also, an unloading device. If a logger slips on a log and his posterior alights on a limb stub, he has suffered a painful "jillpoking."

JAGGER -- Wire rope sliver or "whisker".

JOB-SHARK -- Employment agent.

KERF -- Slit made by saw.

KING SNIPE -- Boss man of track-laying crew.

LANDING -- Where logs are loaded.

LONG BUTT -- (noun or verb) When tree butt is decayed or crooked, or otherwise economically unsuited for use, tree is "long-butted", which means the butt cut is left in the woods. In south the term is "jumpbutt".

LEFTOVERS -- Wood materials for which there is no economic use.

LOKY -- Locomotive.

LOG BRAND -- Hammered identification mark on log ends.

LEADER -- Latest year's height growth on tree's main stem.

MAN CATCHER -- Employment agent.

MEOW -- Kink or bad twist in steel rope.

MOLLY HOGAN -- A substitute for cotter pins, fashioned from strands of wire rope. Formerly widely used, still persisting despite safety codes forbidding them.

MULLIGAN CAR -- Crew car.

MONTHLY INSULT -- Paycheck.

NOSE BAG -- Cold lunch.

NOSE BAG SHOW -- Camp where crew carries lunch to woods.



7.

NODE -- Circle of knots in tree trunk denoting end of one year's height growth and beginning of next.

OUTLAW CAMP -- Small crew preparing next camp site.

PARBUCKLE -- Method of moving a log by rolling in bights of two lines.

PASS LINE -- Highclimber's elevator on spar tree.

PEAVEY -- Cantdog. Tool for rolling logs by hand.

PEELER -- Short log, or bolt. suitable for peeling for plywood.

PUNG -- Logger's purse.

PULL THE PIN -- To quit the job.

PUNK -- Logging camp bread. Also "The punk" is short for whistle punk or signalman.

PULASKI -- Special tool combining ax and hoe principles. Named after ranger hero of 1910 Idaho fires.

PRE-LOGGING -- Removing small breakable timber before the main logging.

PUSH -- Foreman.

PIKE POLE -- Long pole with steel point and hook, used to move logs in water.

POWDER MONKEY -- Dynamite man. Also called gopher.

PAUL BUNYAN -- Logger's hero.

POT -- Steam donkey engine.

QUEBEC CHOKER -- Peavey.

RED LEAD -- Catsup.

RIGGING SLINGER -- Hooktender's first assistant. He picks logs for the turns, untangles rigging, signals to the whistle punk when to start and stop lines.

RIGGING CREW -- The crew that brings in the logs. Consists of choker setters, hook-on-men, whistle punk chaser, rigging slinger and hooktender.

RIPE -- Trees that have reached their "three-score and ten." "Over-ripe" means trees that have attained high old age.

RAFT -- Logs in water, kept in leash by boom-sticks.

ROUND STUFF -- Logs.

ROAD -- A strip of harvesting area embracing everything that can be yarded out from spar tree to tail block.

8.

RESIDUAL STAND -- Trees, often of sawlog size but good growers, left to grow for next harvest cycle, nucleus of next crop. Also called reserve stand.

REPROD -- Forest reproduction. Teen-age and younger trees.

RE-LOGGING -- Business of combing harvested areas for additional materials after primary logging is finished. Often done with lighter equipment which makes it practical.

ROTATION -- Timber crop cycle.

RIGGING -- Lines, blocks, hooks, etc., at business end of logging. "Working in the rigging" means any log-moving job from the stump to wheeled haul.

SIDE -- One complete logging operation.

SLASH -- Leftovers of the timber harvest.

SKIDDER -- Powerful engine for skyline logging, usually with own steel spar.

SKIDROAD -- Roads on which logs were dragged in early days. Usually built of peeled logs. Term later was applied to loggers' favorite hangout area in town (tenderloin district). Eastern writers, ignoring bitter western protests, have sought to pervert the term to "skid row" and apply it to seamy urban districts frequented by derelicts.

SLEEPER -- Railroad tie. In fire protection circles a 'sleeper' is a forest fire, possibly set by lightning, that smoulders quietly and unobserved perhaps several days, later to blaze forth unexpectedly.

SHOO-FLY -- Building the road around by way of the head of a canyon instead of by bridge or fill across it. Used either as verb or noun.

SIDE WINDER -- Tree knocked sideways by another tree. Also denotes fork of a tree growing straight up, parallel to main trunk.

SIWASH --(verb) To bend a powered line around a stump to change direction of pull.

SWEDISH FIDDLE -- Bucking, or cross-cut, saw.

SPIDER WEB -- Early-day term on larger streams and bays, denoting log booms strung across mouths of feeder streams to catch escaped logs.

SKYBOUND -- Tree that refuses to fall, even when wedged. Also denotes butttrigging fouled up in high-lead block.

SKY HOOKS -- Mythical, all-powerful hooks that hooktenders cry for when they have to fight bad hang-ups.

SHEEPHERDER -- Logger who wears bib overalls.

SISTER HOOKS -- Twin hooks on a single line.



9.

SCALER -- Busheler's enemy.

SUCKER -- Big limb.

STAG -- High-water pants and shirts.

SKID GREASE -- Butter.

SHOW -- A logging operation or logging chance.

STRAW LINE -- Light line for rigging up.

STUMPAGE -- Standing merchantable timber. Can also denote price paid for timber.

SAWTIMBER -- Trees over 12 inches in diameter, breast high.

SAPLING -- Trees up to 4 inches diameter.

SEEDLING -- Trees developed from seed. Very small trees.

SNOOSE -- Swedish conditioning powder, Scandinavian dynamite, galloping dust, snuff.

SNAG -- Dead tree, standing.

SPIKE TOP -- Standing tree whose top is dead.

STAG TREE -- Tree whose top has been broken off.

STRING OF FLATS -- Stack of hotcakes.

SETTING -- Area within yarding distance of spar tree.

SLUSH -- Coffee. Also called mud.

SPAR TREE -- Work tree of high-lead logging. Limbed and topped, it supports blocks and rigging hung high to give lift to the pull.

SPRINGBOARD -- Board with steel shoe on one end, formerly widely used by fallers as a platform. Shoed end was stuck in a small notch in tree trunk.

SKY-PILOT -- Traveling preacher who visits camps.

S. I. -- Scenery inspector, logging railroad engineers (civil).

SALT CHUCK -- Tidewater.

SECTION 37 -- Where all good loggers go when they cash in their chips. No underbrush there. Every tree is straight and eight feet in diameter, 400 feet tall. No scalers are allowed there. Section 37 in Klamath Lake near Algoma, Oregon.

10.

TALK -- Creaking of tree immediately before falling to the ground.

TIMBER BEAST -- Logger.

TURN -- A load, In high-lead logging it's usually two chokers full of logs.

TURKEY -- Logger's pack-sack or carryall.

TIN PANTS -- Heavy, water-repellent duck trousers.

TIN PANTS SHOW -- Rainy weather, rainy country.

TREE FARM -- Privately owned land where timber is grown as a crop.

TIN HAT -- Hard hat now almost universally used by western loggers for protection.  
Made of aluminum, plastic or laminated paper -- anything but tin.

UNDERCUT -- Notch cut to regulate direction of tree's fall.

WINDFALL BUCKER -- Bucker who works alone on windthrown trees. Fallers say wind-fall buckers are loggers who not only talk to themselves; they also answer themselves.

WIDOWMAKER -- Dangerous limb which may fall.

WOOD BUCK -- Man who saws firewood for camp.

WHORL -- Circle of limbs denoting end of one year's growth.

WHISKERS -- Jiggers on worn chokers.

WOLF TREE -- Tree that occupies more space than its value warrants. Usually a limby, low-value specimen.

WHISTLE PUNK -- Signalman.

WINTER CHANCE -- Harvesting operation not likely to be forced down by winter weather.

WANIGAN -- Floating camp of river-driving crew.

YARDING -- Moving logs to a central spot. Verb developed in west from eastern and southern "timberyard".



# *Notes...*



LITHOGRAPHED ON LITHOLINN (BASIS 70) MADE BY CROWN ZELLERBACH AT WEST LINN, OREGON